

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections**1. Name**

historic S.H. Kress and Company Building

and/or common Kress Building

**2. Location**

street &amp; number 224 East Douglas

N/A not for publication

city, town Wichita N/A vicinity of

state Kansas

code 20

county Sedgwick

code 173

**3. Classification****Category**☐ district  
☒ building(s)  
☐ structure  
☐ site  
☐ object**Ownership**☐ public  
☒ private  
☐ both  
**Public Acquisition**  
☐ in process  
☐ being considered  
N/A**Status**☒ occupied  
☐ unoccupied  
☐ work in progress  
**Accessible**  
☐ yes: restricted  
☒ yes: unrestricted  
☐ no**Present Use**☐ agriculture  
☒ commercial  
☐ educational  
☐ entertainment  
☐ government  
☐ industrial  
☐ military  
☐ museum  
☐ park  
☐ private residence  
☐ religious  
☐ scientific  
☐ transportation  
☐ other:**4. Owner of Property**

name HISTORIC KRESS BUILDING COMPANY

street &amp; number P.O. Box 12248

city, town Wichita

N/A vicinity of

state Kansas 67277

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds

street &amp; number Sedgwick County Courthouse, 525 North Main

city, town Wichita

state KS 67203

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Kansas Historic Sites Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date August 13, 1980

☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Kansas State Historical Society, 120 West 10th Street

city, town Topeka

state KS 66612

## 7. Description

### Condition

☒ excellent  
☐ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Kress Building is a five-story commercial building which stands at the northwest corner of Broadway and Douglas in the Central Business District of Wichita. It is rectangular in plan, 131 feet north-south by 70 feet east-west.

Erected in 1930, the building is a good example of the Commercial Gothic architecture of the 1920s and 30s. The structure is supported by an internal steel frame, which is expressed externally as a series of bays, three across the south facade and five across the east facade. On the first story, these bays have the form of plate glass windows with tall multipane transoms above, set between square piers. A lintel band over the transoms punctuates the top of the first story and originally contained a narrow strip of signage. On the second through fifth stories the structural frame is expressed by the use of Gothic forms. The structural columns are expressed by wide piers which extend from the top of the first story to the roof parapet. The bays between are filled with clustered multipane metal hopper windows, three to a bay on the south and four to a bay on the east. The floors are divided by spandrels consisting of decorative panels matching the spacing of the windows. The square panels between the second and third and between the fourth and fifth stories have a quatrefoil relief; those between the third and fourth stories have a raised circular pattern of interlocking S-curves. The windows of the fifth story are set beneath broad segmental arches which extend across each bay. The flat roof of the building is bordered by a battlemented Gothic parapet. All of the wall surfaces of the east and south walls are clad in glazed terra cotta, mostly in a light tan color, with some decorative detailing in contrasting colors.

The north and west walls of the building are faced with buff-colored brick. There are no windows on the west, and only a few on the north, overlooking an alley.

There are two levels of basement beneath the building. The sub-basement contains mechanical equipment. The upper basement was originally part of the retail sales area of the Kress store, and is currently available for commercial use. Other than the marble staircase, it contains no notable features.

The first story of the Kress Building originally contained the main sales floor for the Kress store. It was a single large open room with a double-height ceiling supported by square piers. The piers and rear walls were clad in marble with Gothic detailing. The piers were adorned with ornate cast plaster capitals. As part of the rehabilitation of the building in 1982-84, a U-shaped mezzanine was inserted into this large open room. Partition walls were also inserted on the north and west sides to create a hallway around the main commercial space. Most of the significant features were retained in the certified rehabilitation, and the character of the space can still be perceived in the central, open portion.

The upper four floors of the building were used as stockrooms and contain no significant interior features.

The 1982-84 rehabilitation entailed the replacement of the windows on the south and east facades, but the replacement windows were carefully designed to be very similar to the originals. The only original glass on the exterior is to be found in the curved display windows flanking the entrances on both facades. The rehabilitation work was conducted in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation under the guidance of the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Officer's staff.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Architect: G.E. Mackay of New York, NY

Specific dates 1928-30 Builder/Architect Builder: W.H. Bowen Construction Company

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Kress Building in Wichita is significant primarily for its architecture. It is one of the few Gothic style commercial buildings built in Kansas and is probably the most ornate of those that remain. Additionally the building has historical significance as one of the several fine commercial buildings erected in downtown Wichita during the period of growth and prosperity in the 1920s.

S.H. Kress and Company, a chain of variety stores, began operating a store in Wichita about 1908, and moved to another building on the site of the present building in about 1913. Following the First World War, Wichita saw a period of prosperity and rapid growth generated by the oil and aviation industries. By the 1920s the city was becoming a major commercial center. This prosperity prompted the Kress company to expand their operations in Wichita by the erection of a large new store.

The new building was begun in 1928 and opened its doors to the public in January, 1930. It was designed by G.E. Mackay of New York, NY, who also designed the Kress Building in Emporia, KS, built in 1929. The contractor was the W.H. Bowen Construction Company.

The Kress Company operated a store in the building from 1930 until 1968. After the store closed, the building changed ownership several times but remained for the most part vacant and unused until it was acquired by its present owners, who undertook a certified rehabilitation beginning in 1982 in order to bring the Kress Building back to productive commercial use.

THIS STATEMENT REFLECTS CURRENT KNOWLEDGE AND IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Wichita East

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	4	6	4	6	7	6	0	4	1	7	2	1	2	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Lots 128, 130, and 132 on Douglas Avenue: Greiffensteins Original Town (now City) of Wichita, KS, also described as the Northwest corner of Broadway and Douglas extending 70 feet West of the intersection and 138 feet North.

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state N/A code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard J. Cawthon, Architectural Historian

Historic Preservation Department

organization Kansas State Historical Society

date May 8, 1985

street & number 120 West 10th Street

telephone (913) 296-3251

city or town Topeka

state Kansas 66612

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date May 8, 1985

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Continuation sheet

Item number 9

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Davis, Gordon, and Julianne McCarthy. Wichita Architecture 1874-1937. Wichita, KS:  
Wichita Public Schools, 1976.

Ross, Hal, Hal Ottaway & Jack Stewart. Peerless Princess of the Plains: Postcard Views  
of Early Wichita. Wichita, KS: Two Rivers Publishing Co., 1976.

Wichita Beacon, February 27, 1929; January 5, 1930.

Wichita Eagle, December 28, 1928; August 25, 1929.

This nomination was prepared from materials submitted by James P. Ruane of Depew and Gillen,  
Attorneys, 621 First National Bank Building, Wichita, KS 67202.





Kress Building  
Wichita, Sedgwick County, KS

UTM Reference  
14/646760/4172120

Wichita East Quadrangle

